

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MARR, GR, US, TU

SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSION IN THE OFFING

PARIS PASS AMBASSADOR KUBISCH

1. PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS HAS ACCEPTED OPPOSITION LEADER GEORGE MAVROS' REQUEST THAT THERE BE A DISCUSSION IN THE PARLIAMENT ON THE STATUS OF THE US-GREEK BASE NEGOTIATIONS AND GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS. IN ON OCTOBER 14 RESPONSE TO AN OCTOBER 11 LETTER FROM MAVROS CALLING FOR SUCH A DISCUSSION IN WHICH MAVROS CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT'S "SOLITARY" HANDLING OF FOREIGN POLICY, THE PRIME MINISTER STATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES BRIEF THE PARLIAMENT FROM "TIME TO TIME" AND, AS IT IS HIS CUSTOM TO DO SO AT THE OPENING AND CLOSING OF PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS, HE WILL "SOON" ADDRESS THAT BODY "ON THE COURSE OF NATIONAL ISSUES."

2. IN HIS REPLY TO MAVROS, THE PRIME MINISTER STATED
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THAT AS HE HAD SAID PREVIOUSLY (AT THE OPENING OF THE

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL FAIR IN SEPTEMBER), "WE HAVE NO REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE STAND OF THE TURKISH SIDE" IN THE DIALOGUE THAT IS ABOUT TO BEGIN ON THE AEGEAN ISSUE BUT THAT GREECE WOULD ENTER THE TALKS WITH "HONEST INTENTIONS, SERIOUSNESS, AND RESOLUTENESS". HE ADDED THAT "ONLY" THROUGH THE PENDING GOT-GOG DIALOGUE WOULD GREECE DEVELOP "CORRECT INDICATIONS REGARDING THE SHAPING OF GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS."

3. ON THE U.S.-GREEK BASE TALKS, THE PRIME MINISTER REMINDED MAVROS THAT IT WAS HIS GOVERNMENT THAT TOOK THE INITIATIVE TO REVISE THE STATUS OF THE BASES. HE RECALLED HIS PAST STATEMENT THAT ONLY THOSE U.S. BASES THAT ALSO SERVE GREEK INTERESTS WOULD REMAIN IN GREECE AND THOSE THAT DO WILL BE PLACED UNDER GREEK CONTROL. HE NOTED THAT MAVROS HIMSELF HAD SUPPORTED THIS POLICY IN THE PAST. CARAMANLIS STATED THAT LAST APRIL, WHEN THE GOG FELT THE US-TURKISH DCA THREATENED TO "DISTURB" THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE AEGEAN, THE GOVERNMENT CONCLUDED A FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT WITH THE USG WHICH NOT ONLY OBTAINED \$700 MILLION IN DEFENSE ASSISTANCE FOR GREECE BUT ALSO ESTABLISHED "A STATUS FOR THE BASES BETTER THAN ORIGINALLY ENVISIONED."

4. MAVROS HAD REPEATED IN HIS LETTER HIS CHARGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO KEEP THE OPPOSITION AND THE "PEOPLE" INFORMED OF FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENTS. THE PRIME MINISTER DENIED THIS ALLEGATION IN HIS LETTER. BUT MAVROS RETURNED IMMEDIATELY TO IT WHEN THE TEXTS OF THE EXCHANGE WERE RELEASED OCTOBER 15, STATING THE PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT BRIEFING OF THE PARLIAMENT "FROM TIME TO TIME" AND OF THE PRIME MINISTER DOING SO AT THE OPENING AND CLOSING OF PARLIAMENT IS "POLITICALLY AND CONSTITUTIONALLY UNACCEPTABLE." INSTEAD, HE SAID, WHEN THE OPPOSITION SEEKS SUCH A BRIEFING IT IS INCUMBENT UPON THE PRIME MINISTER TO DO SO IMMEDIATELY. MAVROS REITERATED HIS POSITION THAT IN A DEMOCRACY THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT DECIDE ALONE WITHOUT FIRST HEARING THE VIEWS OF THE OPPOSITION. "WE HAVE THE RIGHT AND THE OBLIGATION," HE SAID, "TO EXPRESS OUR VIEWS."

5. COMMENT: THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER LEFT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIMING OF THE DISCUSSION IN THE PARLIAMENT VAGUE. AND MAVROS' SUBSEQUENT COMMENTARY DID NOTHING TO FORCE THE PRIME MINISTER TO MAKE ANY SPECIFIC COMMITMENT. WHEN SUCH BRIEFINGS DO TAKE PLACE, THEY ARE LESS A "DEBATE" THAN A SERIES OF STATEMENTS, BEGINNING WITH A STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER FOLLOWED BY STATEMENTS BY MAVROS, PASOK LEADER ANDREAS PAPANDREOU AND EDA LEADER ILIAS ILIOU. CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY RULES ARE SO STRUCTURED THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE

FOR EITHER OF THE TWO COMMUNIST PARTIES WITH REPRESENTATIVES
IN THE PARLIAMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE "DEBATES".
MILLS

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